



IN A BOAT WITH THE WISE MEN

AN ARTWORK FROM JAPAN

IDEAS FOR THE CHILDREN'S SERVICE
AT EPIPHANY



MATERIALS FOR THE CHILDREN'S SERVICE

- Take the poster with the Epiphany picture from Japan out of the booklet
- Portray Emso, the elephant, creatively, possibly using the copy template
- Pencils
- Paper



Ready-to-print copy template at:
www.ems-friends.org

INFO ABOUT THE ARTIST

Sadao Watanabe (1913-1996) was a Japanese artist and is probably the most well-known Christian artist in the country. His trademark is stencil images based on Bible stories, often embedded in the Japanese context. His art is shaped by Japanese folk art (Mingei), which is based on traditional domestic crafts. His pictures are in demand the world over and have been awarded national prizes.

EMSO AND THE THREE WISE MEN

The children sit around a map of the world. Emso, the elephant, reports of his encounter with the picture by Sadao Watanabe.



»» Hello! And thanks for letting me come to your Children's Service today. My name is Emso. Can you guess what I am?

Right, an elephant! I love travelling and meeting lots of people. I am particularly interested in their faith and special days. There are many special days in the church year and they all have their own meaning. Today we are celebrating Epiphany.

This is a day I know very well. In the beginning, I could not even pronounce it. Epiph... was all that I could remember. But now I know how to say it: E-PIPH-A-NY. Say it after me, altogether now...

Epiphany means the festival of manifestation. We celebrate three different events at once, which are all supposed to have happened on a 6th of January: the arrival of the Wise Men from the East in Bethlehem, the baptism of Jesus, and Jesus's first miracle, turning water into wine at the wedding in Cana. Today I am going to tell you about my meeting with the Wise Men.

Just imagine, I was on one of the beautiful Japanese islands in East Asia. Look on the map to find Japan... That is where I saw the Wise Men. Not in real life, but on a print by the Japanese artist Sadao Watanabe. The picture he painted about Epiphany is fascinating. Let's have a look at it together. Oops! Where have I put it? Sometimes I am a bit careless. Will you help me to find it?

The children look for the hidden picture and place it in the middle. Now everyone looks at the picture together. The following questions and theological suggestions can be used individually for the group.



EVERYONE LOOKS AT THE PICTURE

**THEOLOGICAL INPUT
TWO RESOURCES FOR GROUP LEADERS**

1. The picture shows Epiphany in the Japanese context. Japan is an island nation and the sea its natural border. In the Bible the Three Wise Men cross the desert to visit the baby Jesus. They bring Jesus valuable presents and go home still more enriched. Filled with joy at the birth of Jesus, they master the challenges and overcome borders such as deserts and seas. Children all over the world live with different borders. The journey of the Wise Men tells us about the hope that these borders can be overcome – all of them, each in their own context.

2. Matthew 2:12 reads, »And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another way.«
(The whole story of the Wise Men is found in Matthew 2:1-12)

Artist Watanabe said himself that the picture is about this particular passage from Matthew. We see the Wise Men returning home, just as Watanabe placed them in his Japanese context. Overwhelmed with joy at the birth of Jesus, they are deliberately taking another way home, by sea. They wear colourful clothes, the background is very red and the boat is decorated with flowers. All three of them are rowing and they seem to be very close up to one another. The experience at Jesus’ crib goes with them and sustains them on their way.

POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

What can you see on the picture?

What colours can you discover in the picture?
What effect do the colours have on you?

What pattern do the clothes and the boat have?

What effect do the faces have on you?

How much room is there in the boat?

What other stories from the Bible do you know in which water and boats play a role?

And this is an interesting point: Here, the Wise Men are travelling in a boat on the water. How is that portrayed in your country?

Do they also travel on the water?

AN IDEA FOR A DRAWING

What route would the Wise Men follow to come to your Children’s Service?
What form of transport would they take?
Draw a picture!



PROPOSED SONGS

- We Three Kings of Orient Are
- He's Got the Whole World in His Hands
- Jesus, where can we find you
(Thuma Mina 217)

PRAYER

Merciful God,
thank you for the festival of Christmas,
thank you that we were able to celebrate
the birth of Jesus.
Now Christmas is over. But let us not lose the joy
about Jesus. The Wise Men are going home, too.
You are with them on the water.
Even if some ways of travel scare us:
You are always with us, whether in a bus
or on foot or on the water.
Protect all those who have to take dangerous routes.
You are with us in the New Year. Thank you for that.
Amen.

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YOU + ME: FRIENDS AROUND THE WORLD
is an educational programme for
Children's Service and primary school.

Children get to know each other worldwide:
at eye-level, ecumenically and open for
commonalities and differences.



More information at www.ems-friends.org/en